

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 12764

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, FR, SY

SUBJECT: FERNAND ROUILLON, NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA

1. FERNAND ROUILLON WAS BORN DECEMBER 11, 1920 IN SOUTH-WEST FRANCE. HE WAS IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY FROM 1944 TO 1947, WHEN HE WAS POSTED TO THE FRENCH RESIDENCE GENERAL IN TUNISIA. IN 1951 HE WAS BRIEFLY EMBASSY ATTACHE IN LONDON. FROM 1952 TO 1956 HE WAS ATTACHED TO THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN OTTAWA, AND WHILE THERE HE WAS NAMED SECOND SECRETARY (1953). ROUILLON WAS IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AT THE QUAI UNTIL 1958, AND IN CULTURAL AFFAIRS FROM THEN UNTIL 1960. AFTER AN ASSIGNMENT AS FIRST SECRETARY IN RABAT MOROCCO (1960-63), HE WAS NAMED MIDDLE EAST ADVISOR TO THE FRENCH UN MISSION IN NEW YORK, WHERE HE REMAINED UNTIL 1968, ACHIEVING THE RANK OF FIRST COUNSELOR IN 1967. FROM 1968 TO 1970 HE WAS FIRST COUNSELOR IN ATHENS, AND FROM JANUARY 1971 UNTIL HIS ASSIGNMENT THIS MONTH AS AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA HE WAS DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE LEVANT AT THE QUAI. HE HOLDS THE RANK OF MINISTER, SECOND CLASS.

2. WHILE SERVING IN NEW YORK ROUILLON APPEARS TO HAVE HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH HIS AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS. DURING THE FOUR AND A HALF YEARS HE WAS IN CHARGE OF LEVANT AFFAIRS AT THE QUAI, ROUILLON EXERCISED CONSIDERABLY MORE INFLUENCE ON POLICY THAN IS NORMAL

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FOR A DEPUTY DIRECTOR. HIS INTELLECTUAL ATTACHMENT TO

FRENCH POST-1967 MIDEAST POLICY WAS CLEAR, BUT IN THE EARLY PART OF HIS TOUR HE DISCUSSED CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION WITH A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF DETACHMENT. MORE RECENTLY, HE HAS APPEARED TO BECOME SOMEWHAT EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO ARAB THESES. HE WAS PROBABLY THE CHIEF QUAI PROPONENT, AND PERHAPS THE INITIATOR, OF FRENCH MOVEMENT TO CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE PLO AND OF THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE, AN INITIATIVE ESPECIALLY CLOSE TO HIS HEART. WHILE ROUILLON WAS NOT ALWAYS FRANK IN DISCUSSING HIS AREA'S PROBLEMS WITH PARIS EMBASSY OFFICERS, ON MANY OCCASIONS HE WAS FORTHCOMING AND HELPFUL. HE IS VERY HARD-WORKING, INTELLIGENT, CULTIVATED, WITTY, AND OPEN, ABLE TO DISCUSS MOST SENSITIVE SUBJECTS OBJECTIVELY.

3. ABOUT 5'8", SLIGHT AND BALDING, ROUILLON WEARS GLASSES AND IS A CHAIN SMOKER WITH A HACK. HE AND HIS WIFE, BOTH OF WHOM SPEAK FAIRLY GOOD ENGLISH, HAVE A WIDE RANGE OF INTERESTS AND ENJOY INTELLECTUAL CONVERSATION. THE ROUILLONS HAVE NINE CHILDREN.
RUSH

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